described. When matches are attempted, the invention adds contextual information to the user's search string. Users can have input and output via telephone, email, a person, fax, surface mail, or web-based email. A community is
5   defined as a list of two or more users that wish to communicate with each other based upon matching words of a search string. The matched search string or variation identifies the list. Users can choose to contact others through a variety of means including but not limited to
10 computer email, instant messages, SMS messages, bulletin boards, phone, fax, or chat room. **FIG. 11**

CLAIMS

15 What is claimed is:

1. A method for automatic formation of electronic communities, comprising the steps of:

a) providing a database for unique user identifier and
20 associated search strings;

b) entering a first unique identifier for a first user and a first associated search string into said database;

c) determining whether said first search string substantially matches a search string previously stored in
25 said database;

d) querying said first user whether said first user wants to join a community in response to a matching search string;

e) querying second user associated with said matching

search string whether said second user wants to join a

community with said first user; and

f) forming a community if said first user and said second

5   user both respond affirmatively to community formation.

g) said community will initially be anonymous - without

specific identifying information until both parties agree

to identify themselves to the other.

h) displaying matches according to user preference to have

10   matches sorted by date, closeness of search term, volume of

similar searches, or a combination of some or all of these

variables.

i) contacting these additional matches will be accomplished

in the same manner as d)-g) shown above.

15   j) creating "MySearch" pages with the results of various

searching and matching shown, as well as

k) the creation of certain organizational Searching and

Matching pages to collect with permission the results of

various searches and matching using this invention and

20   making same available with appropriate levels of security,

2. The method of Claim 1 wherein step f) further comprises

the step establishing a connection between said first user

and said second user over the Internet.

3.   The method of Claim 1 wherein steps d)-g) provide the
user with means of ordering matches and sorting them by
virtue of date, volume, or closeness of the search term.

5

4. The method of forming communities in claim 1 comprising
the steps of two or more persons over a telephone wireless
or landline system, the Internet, a computer network, or a
standalone computer;

10

5. The method of creating a database referenced in claim 1
that also includes both new and previously created
communities formed during a match on a standalone computer,
networked computer or telephone system;

15

6. The method of allowing automated software agents to join
in the creation of a new community referenced in claim 1 if
one or more relevant community(ies) already exist(s),
wherein only the present user is asked to join an existing

20 community;

7. The method of determining the similarity of searches in
claim 1 that can be determined using string matching;

25 8. The method of determining the similarity of searches in
claim 1 using external contextual identifiers;

9. The method of determining the similarity of searches in
claim 1 that can be determined using a sounds-like program;

30

10. The method of determining the similarity of searches in
claim 1 that is determined using natural language

processing in which the underlying meaning of the word or phrase is matched against the underlying meaning of the words or phrase of prior searches;

5   11. The method of determining the similarity of searches in claim 1 that can be determined using a neural net program;

12. The method of teaching a neural net in claim 1 to learn from previous matches;

10

13. The method of applying in claim 1 a system of security permissions where similarity of searches is constrained by users or an administrator or employer or supervisor with a system of security permissions controlled automatically or

15 by the intervention of an actual person granting security based upon any criteria;

14. The method of inputting and outputting of claim 1 where said method of input of the search terms and output

20 communications can be via: a) the spoken word into a phone, b)email, c) fax or d) web email, e) a network, f) automated software agents, g) instant messaging, h)SMS messaging, I)automated agents;

25 15. The method of claim 1 wherein the search is performed on a stand alone computer or other communications device to: a) telephone communications network, b) an intranet, c) an extranet, d) the Internet;

30 16. The method of providing in claim 1 to provide users with control over being notified of a match; and giving users the ability to turn such notification on and off, or

to permit only recognized lists of users to be matched;

17.   The method of identifying in claim 1 an identifying string for the user's password and his or her: a) email address, b) fax number, c) identifier from a redirector source, d) telephone number;

18. The method of setting the level of matching desired with respect to closeness, age of search, security and other constraints;

19. Choosing by users in claim 1 the nature of community they wish to be invited into (e.g., communities that are public, private, narrow, broad, computer, telephonic, text or voice, limited by geography, etc.);

20. Providing in claim 1 a community with one or more of the following functions: telephonic, chat, bulletin board, links to related goods and services, other chats, other bulletin boards, Usenet groups, other groups and functions;

21. The method of using in claim 1 a telecommunications system consisting of voice communication over wired or wireless digital or analog phone systems for matching;

22. The method of permitting users to choose to take advantage of speech to text and text to speech technologies;

23. The method of claim 1, including means to permit language translation so users can, for example, communicate within a single community in any language including

Chinese, Russian, Spanish, Arabic, Japanese, Hebrew or
English, and so forth;

24. The method of claim 1 as well as any other means of

5   creating community including means to permit members of a
community formed by the present invention to
a) conduct joint searches and to post same for private or
   public viewing
b) rate jointly and severally the content, consistency,

10   depth and relevance of websites as well as other
   information valued by the community.

25. The apparatus for accomplishing 1a.-1k., 2-24.

15 26. the means for accomplishing 1a.-1k., 2-24.